

NAIROBI EVANGELICAL GRADUATE SCHOOL  
OF THEOLOGY

*A STUDY INTO THE OPEN CIRCLE AS A  
TEACHING METHOD: ST. LUKES CHURCH  
KENYATTA*

BY  
MANYA WANDEFU STEPHEN

*A Thesis Submitted To The Graduate School in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master  
of Divinity in Christian Education*

JULY, 2003

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**Approved:**

**Supervisor:**



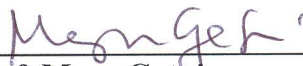
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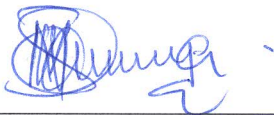
**July, 2008**

Student's declaration

**A STUDY INTO THE OPEN CIRCLE AS A TEACHING METHOD:  
ST. LUKES CHURCH KENYATTA**

I declare that this is my original work and has not been submitted to any other  
College or University for academic credit.

The views presented herein are not necessarily those of Nairobi Evangelical  
Graduate School of Theology or the Examiners



(Signed)

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Manya Wandefu Stephen

July, 2008

## ABSTRACT

Because of its strategic position, Nairobi city is home to many people groups. As these people come to Nairobi, they carry with them different customs and cultures. Yet Christianity has to find a dwelling among these people. It is therefore the duty of Christian educators to find ways and means through which the word of God can reach and address the needs of these people groups.

This researcher's focus was on the appropriate teaching approaches, specifically the open circle teaching method which is found almost throughout the continent of Africa. This qualifies this method as the most fitting and appropriate since it can easily be applied across the board. St. Luke's Church Kenyatta which is mainly an inter-ethnic congregation has seized this opportunity and is now using the open circle as a common means of reaching out to the youth of this Church.

Qualitative study method was applied in this research. Data was collected through interviews and participant observation. Having analyzed and interpreted the data, the researcher found out that:

- The factors that affect the use of the open circle as a teaching method are directly related to the learner, the context, the content and the teacher.
- The emerging curriculum is an answer to the needs and issues of the learners.
- The open circle method can be used in relational and doctrinal teaching.

## **TO**

The Almighty God who desires that all may know Him, to my mother Norah who first traveled this road by way of her biblical exposition to the Tukutendereza Movement, to my wife Gladys in whose love I have found confidence, and to the congregation of St. Luke's Church Kenyatta-Nairobi where I have served as an attached clergy for these three years of study.

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## Content

<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	iv
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	vi
<b>CHAPTER ONE</b> .....	1
<b>Introduction</b> .....	1
History of the Open Circle .....	2
Statement Problem .....	4
Purpose of Study .....	5
Significance of the Study .....	5
Research Questions .....	5
<b>Definition of Terms</b> .....	6
Limitations .....	6
Delimitations .....	7
<b>CHAPTER TWO</b> .....	8
<b>Literature Review</b> .....	8
Understanding the Learners .....	8
Cognitive Development of the Learners .....	9
Development within the Social Context .....	10
Moral Development .....	11
<b>Intelligence and Learning Styles</b> .....	12
Teaching Methods .....	15
Teacher-Centered Teaching Methods .....	17
<i>Lecture Method</i> .....	17
<i>Memorization and Recitation</i> .....	18
Learner-Centered Methods .....	19
<i>Group Discussion</i> .....	19
<i>Question and Answers</i> .....	21
<i>Computer-Based Learning</i> .....	22
Summary of Reviewed Literature .....	22
<b>CHAPTER THREE</b> .....	24
<b>Methodology</b> .....	24
Research Design .....	24
The Researcher's Role .....	25

Entry .....	26
Population .....	26
Data Collection Procedures .....	26
<b>The Instrument Design.....</b>	<b>27</b>
Plan for Data Analysis .....	28
Data Organization .....	28
Reading through Data .....	28
Categories, Themes and Patterns (Coding).....	29
Writing of the Report.....	29
Validity and Reliability of Instrument .....	29
<b>CHAPTER FOUR .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Data Analysis and Data Interpretation.....</b>	<b>31</b>
Reporting Research Findings .....	31
<i>The Relevancy of Subjects Taught.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>The Process of Selecting Topics.....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Choice of Teachers .....</i>	<i>33</i>
<i>Learning Environment .....</i>	<i>34</i>
<i>Teaching Methods.....</i>	<i>34</i>
Transferring of Learning to Real Life Context .....	35
Realization of Church Objectives .....	36
Report Interpretation.....	38
Developing and Nurturing Relationships.....	38
Relevant Curriculum.....	39
Exploration and Exploitation of New Knowledge .....	40
Identification and Development of Talent and Giftings .....	42
The Teaching of the Basic Christian Doctrine.....	43
Summary.....	44
<b>CHAPTER FIVE.....</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Conclusions, Implications and Recommendations.....</b>	<b>45</b>
Conclusions .....	45
Implications .....	46
Recommendations.....	47
<b>References .....</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>52</b>



## LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 1 Conventional Class .....	41
Fig. 2 Open Circle Class .....	41
Fig. 3 A Summary of the Open Circle Process .....	44

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

The ministry to which God is calling believers is basically a relational ministry, whereby every believer has to be regarded as a partner in all ways and in everything. Christian educators are no exception. They are to be people who have a sound personal relationship with Christ and his people; people who have a loving, caring fellowship and friendship with Christ and are willing to bring others into such a relationship. Christian educators are divinely charged with the responsibility of affecting people with all that it takes for one to live a godly life. As such they have to come up with programs that are practical and workable, touching on the spiritual as well as the physical aspect of humanity. It is with this in mind that St. Luke's Church Kenyatta has put in place the use of open circles in the teaching ministry to youth in the church.

St. Luke's Church Kenyatta is part of the All Saints Cathedral Diocese, of the Anglican Church of Kenya (A.C.K.). This church is found in Nairobi along Mbagathi Way. Kenyatta National Hospital, Mbagathi District Hospital and Moi Forces Memorial Hospital are nearby. St. Luke's Church has a congregation of about two thousand five hundred people with six services in place. Apart from hospital workers and their families who form the larger part of the congregation, Sudanese and Ethiopian congregations meet in this church. Services are conducted in English, Kiswahili, Arabic, Dinka and Oromo languages.

## History of the Open Circle

The open circle method of teaching at St. Luke's Church was begun by Mr. and Mrs. Harry and Olive Cotter in 1998. Mr. and Mrs. Cotter were missionaries who worked with the Anglican Church of Kenya. They were seconded to Kenya from the Diocese of Sydney in Australia. Prior to joining St. Luke's Church in 1998, the Cotters had worked with the Fellowship of Christian Unions in colleges and universities of Kenya (FOCUS) since the early sixties. FOCUS is a part of the international fellowship of Christian unions of evangelical students in colleges and universities. Cotters' experience among the Kenyan communities and the open circle learning in Australia motivated them to begin using the open circle teaching method at St. Luke's church.

Just as the word circle suggests, at St. Luke's Kenyatta, learners sit in a circle during church education classes. This group meets either under a tree or in the church hall where learning takes place. During the teaching-learning process, the teacher sits in the circle together with learners and acts as a facilitator. At times the teacher may give a lecture, questions and answers, group discussion topics, or even use rote learning, depending on topic of interest and time allocated. Such topics as Anglican liturgy, tenets of faith as practiced by the Anglicans, African wisdom of decision making and civic education are taught in the open circle.

The use of a circle as both the organizational structure and descriptive metaphor for a meeting of equals is likely to have been a part of the African history for long time. The learning circle is a mechanism for organizing and honoring the collective wisdom of the group and is present in many indigenous cultures. For example, in the early native cultures, councils of elders came together to understand problems in the spirit of shared community in 'wisdom' circles. Learning circles have

served as effective strategy with clear links to social change (Riel 1997). Over time and across countries, civic organizations, neighborhood communities, trade unions, social justice groups and churches have used learning circles to empower their members to make decisions and take actions, this is because these circles functioned as places of discussing important issues within the said communities.

St. Luke's Church aims to bring up a people who have a sound and living relationship with Christ and one another. To be able to achieve this, St. Luke's church has committed to:

1. Locally train people in pastoral ministries such as evangelism, missions and counseling.
2. Identify, support and send to training institutions those who feel called to pulpit or other ministries.
3. Conduct Bible study classes to believers of all ages and status.
4. Participate and support missions and evangelistic outreach within the neighborhood and beyond the estates that surround St. Luke's church.
5. Support and strengthen the existing estate fellowships while pioneering new ones.
6. Support the social welfare of the members of St. Luke's church.
7. Reach out to the needy among the communities living around St. Luke's church without forgetting some who live away from St. Luke's.

Looking at the goal and objectives of St. Luke's Church, one discovers that God works through the church to accomplish the divine purposes and specific tasks it has been assigned. From the list presented above, this research identified St. Luke's church tasks as proclamation, community formation, service advocacy and worship. In these four, this researcher believes that teaching serves as a connective membrane

that links these five tasks to form a vital and a living body of ministry and mission to the world as suggested by Apostle Paul in I Corinthians 12: 4-7. Teaching serves to sustain the body of Christ in its variety of service. Teaching also serves to form the corporate identity as God's people discern their common good in fulfilling the father's purpose in the world (Pazmino 2001, 114). This corporate identity as God's people should be the motivation that drives St. Luke's church in championing for the concept of the open circles.

### Statement Problem

Looking back at the historical facts in general, Braunius argued that for decades, church education has been propositional, didactic and dogmatic. The current situation is no longer same; while continuing to focus on content and propositional truth, teaching is now much more relational, communal and aesthetic (Braunius 1995, 13). The educational ministry of the church continues to reflect this relational transition as curriculum gives less attention to academically and intellectually based processes and more attention to relationally-focused participatory activities. Fostering of both listening and speaking skills is also realized when members sit face to face during learning sessions.

The researcher has personally experienced the open circle teaching method in urban Africa in the course of teaching the youth in the Church setting within the specific context that is St. Luke's Church Kenyatta, Nairobi. Research carried out in other parts of the world concerning group-related teaching methods confirms the general value of the open circle teaching method. With this in mind, this research was concerned with the question of how effective the open circle teaching method is in the context of urban Africa.

### Purpose of Study

The interactive open circle teaching method encourages relational as well as cognitive growth of the learners involved. Once again this touches on the effectiveness of the open circle teaching method. In regard to this, the purpose of this research was to explore the effectiveness of the open circle teaching method in urban Africa with specific reference to St. Luke's Church Kenyatta.

### Significance of the Study

The researcher hoped that the findings of this study will be helpful in the following ways:

1. The study will encourage other Christian educators to use the open circle teaching method.
2. The study will be of help to Christian curriculum designers in coming up with curriculum material in conformity with this teaching method.
3. This research will give insight for the educational planners of other congregations or even denominations that may intend to use the model at St. Luke's Church in developing similar education programs in their respective churches.
4. This research will help teachers understand the complexity of the teaching-learning process.

### Research Questions

In an effort to find out the effectiveness of the open circle as a teaching method, the researcher developed the following questions as a guide to seek the needed information:

- RQ 1. What factors affect the effective use of the open circle teaching method at St. Luke's Kenyatta?

RQ 2. How well do learners, through the open circle teaching method, transfer learning to real life contexts?

RQ 3. How well are church objectives being realized through the use of the open circle teaching method?

### Definition of Terms

Open circle: The act of people seating round during the teaching-learning process at St. Luke's Church is called open circle. The Youths' action of seating in a circle during Sunday school is therefore known as a 'youth open circle.'

Youth: According to the Anglican Church, this is a period of time from puberty to full growth. Persons between the ages of eighteen to forty five are considered as young in the Anglican Church. However the youth open circle of St. Luke's Kenyatta comprise of persons aged 18 to 27 years.

Effectiveness: Producing the intended or expected results. In the case of the open circle, effectiveness is to be understood as being 'functional' in terms of Church ministries.

Vicar in charge: A senior Parish minister. There may be other Vicars, but the Vicar in charge is the senior 'Pastor' of the Parish.

### Limitations

This research was limited to current open circle of the youth at St. Luke's church Kenyatta. Whereas it would be wiser to do this study within the whole Diocese of All Saints Cathedral, implications of costs, time, and accessibility to the relevant population make such a study impossible at this time. In addition, administrative challenges would not allow such a study to be carried out at this time. The researcher

accessed only those youth and teachers currently involved at St. Luke's Church Kenyatta.

### Delimitations

The open circle teaching method is a very broad area of study hence it is not the intention of this paper to discuss all matters pertaining to the effectiveness of the open circle teaching method. This paper's concern is the effectiveness of the open circle teaching method as it specifically applies to the Christian frame of reference in the context of the church, specifically St. Luke's Church Kenyatta, Nairobi.

This study is limited to the youth open circle of St. Luke's Kenyatta, whose members comprise the youth of St. Luke's Church Kenyatta and their teachers.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### Introduction

In this section the researcher will interact with what others have said concerning learning and learning-teaching process. The entire chapter will focus on the following topics:

1. Understanding the learners
2. Intelligence and the learning styles
3. The teaching methods

#### Understanding the Learners

Hillier (2003) argued that effective teaching is only realized when teachers understand their learners. This understanding includes what learners hope to gain from such programs as the teacher will be offering. Hiller asserted that teachers must come up with successful programs but the challenge is, “How can a teacher develop a program which will be successful” (2003, 56)? One activity that a teacher needs is to develop a clear set of aims and objectives for the programs in mind. Yet can the teacher do this if he has not met the learners and does not know what they need to know in order to return to study?

The experience of the teacher plays a key role in such a situation. He may begin thinking of some common activities that can be used with all learners. It is important that the teacher carries out an analysis of the learning requirements of his learners as part of these programs, suggested Hillier (Hillier 2003, 56). This analysis

will inform the teacher of what learners already know and what they hope to learn next. Apart from this knowledge, the teacher is not in a position to know if the learners have any specific learning requirements such as physical disabilities. In skills development, the teacher, using his experience of teaching will be able to know what learners can actually do. Finally the teacher must be sure that the learners have all the information they need to make informed judgment about their next learning program.

In the teaching-learning process, the learner is more in focus than the contents. St. John reinforces this truth in chapter 20:31 when he says that the purpose of his writing was to make known to individuals, Jesus Christ the son of God. The people would then learn of Christ and believe. The content is only meaningful in relation to the learner. Primarily, what the open circle teaching method proposes is that learners are not in class for the teachers' sake but teachers are in class for the learners' sake. The teacher is in this case responsible for their development. This development is divided into three major categories: cognitive, affective and psychomotor.

### Cognitive Development of the Learners

The term 'development' in itself suggests growth, though this growth should not be assumed as beginning from zero. This is to suggest, as mentioned earlier, prior leaning and life experiences which the learner brings into class. This research assumes that this is the starting point to cognitive development, which involves training learners to think in a logical and sequential way, assimilating and accommodating concepts and facts as presented. Commenting on Piaget's theory of cognitive development Yount said:

Every individual functions within his environment in an interactive fashion. We know that we know as a result of the interaction between ourselves and our environment. Intelligence is not simply poured into children. Rather they actively structure understanding-they help create it through their own activity. (1996, 65)

Ingule, Rono and Ndambuki (1996) on the other hand reminded teachers that their learners are cognitive beings. In cognitive understanding, people are not seen as controlled by external forces but that they think and make choices. Individual thoughts and interpretations are a powerful influence on their future actions and ideas (Ingule et al 1996, 323). In view of what Yount and Ingule et al said then, it seems that there is a restructuring and re-organizing of files of experiences within the learner depending on the added knowledge. The learning based on old experiences is improved on in the learning process. It is therefore important that teachers develop their learner's cognition.

Through the open circle teaching method learners must be able to share freely from these restructuring and re-organizing of files, improving the inter-transfer of knowledge among learners as compared to didactic individual learning emphasized by other non-group methods of teaching such as lecture.

#### Development within the Social Context

All learning must have a context, for no learning can take place out of the social environment. Learning is not independent but dependent, among other things, on community which is purely a social entity. Pazmino (1995) looked at the Christian community as a social entity both in its historical and contemporary expression (Pazmino 1995, 151). According to this researcher then, the variety and unity of "Christianity" within its' social context impacts upon the thought and practice of Christian education. What does this mean to Christian educators? For us to understand the teaching-learning process, culture and society must not be mutually exclusive. To illustrate this, Pazmino observed:

The sociology of knowledge treats knowledge (or what counts as knowledge) as socially constructed or constituted. It also examines how subjects or disciplines are socially constructed as a set of shared meanings. The idea that knowledge is presented in culture implies that knowledge can be socially determined and in particular, determined by the needs of both groups and individuals. (1995, 159)

In light of what Pazmino said, we are likely to think of meaning not only as being within individuals but also in the society. This being the case then, teachers must understand their learners as part of the larger whole, in that a learner is part of the community, and this reflects to a larger extent what the learner's community is. The learner's beliefs, thought patterns, behavior and actions are shaped by his social context. As such, the teaching methods (open circle) employed by teachers must be in conformity with the society's beliefs and practice.

### Moral Development

Elaborating on the importance of moral development, Yount (1996) believed that teaching involves more than transmitting content from instructor to student. He argued that the act of teaching is a human process that involves moral issues (Yount 1996, 103). Indeed teaching would be difficult without rules and regulations to ensure that the learning process is not interfered with. Such basic learning rules as class discipline, equality of opportunity, honesty and a fair evaluation are a must for the learning-teaching process.

Teachers must understand the importance of moral development of their learners. However, as much as the development of an individual as a member of a whole group is desirable, it is also important that individual moral development is not ignored. If moral development is not taken care of, then chances are that people will not take responsibility for decisions taken. Yet the decisions we make everyday, affect our relationships with God and fellow men, either for better or for worse.

There are other personal moral issues that are a challenge to learners out of class. Learning experiences concern not only what is in class but also what is out of class. These issues affect both cognitive as well as social performance of the learner. These include issues such as drug abuse, promiscuity, violence and abortion.

Though Yount (1996) separated morality and Christian faith (Yount 1996, 103), this researcher believes that faith directly affects morality. When the Bible addresses such sins as sexual immorality, greed, anger and lies, what we are hearing in essence is that our decisions of faith dictate our morality. Colossians 3:5-10 is a clear illustration of how scripture integrates the issues of morality. Christian educators should therefore help learners develop morally by selecting appropriate teaching methods. Apart from students sharpening other students in terms of morality, the open circle teaching method must be in position to present a central point of focus in terms of morality, which will act as a model for all the learners. In this case, the system if well used will produce standard morals of every other circle that may be formed in any other Church.

### Intelligence and Learning Styles

It is commonly believed that people favor some particular methods of interacting with, taking in, and processing stimuli or information. It is from this concept that the idea of 'individualized learning styles' originated. According to Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter (2005), a learning style is a method of learning particular to an individual that is presumed to allow that individual to learn best (Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter 2005, 60-61). This research proposes that teachers should assess the learning styles of their students and adopt teaching methods to best fit students' learning styles.

Not every one of us is the same! Differences exist in almost everything about us. Each one of us has unique finger print; we are of different sizes and complexions, races, economic and social status. The different ways that we each learn is almost as unique for each of us. LeFever reminded us that, just like we all prefer to take in information in different ways when want to find out news, we also each have preferences when it comes to learning (LeFever 1987, 39-43). Delivering training must therefore involve a variety of activities which cater for the mix of learning styles within a group. In a large class it is not possible to cater to everyone's individual styles. Instead teachers should teach around the circle of styles, knowing that it will help all.

Although Lefever (1987) classified learners into five different categories (according to common senses), Lingenfelter (2005) on the other hand thought that learners can only be seen in two broader categories. These are relational or global learners who see the whole first and analytical or dichotomous learners who see the parts first, and then relate them with the whole (Lefever 1987, 49-70; Lingenfelter and Lingenfelter 2005, 60). It is even more interesting to note that Anthony (2001) further classified learners into four broader categories. These are collaborative learners who begin with what they already know, feel or need. These types of learners share from their past experiences. The second type of learners is analytical learners, who enjoy answering questions such as, "What new things do we need to know?" It is in the third type of learners that Anthony agreed with Lefever concerning the common sense learners. He claimed that these types of learners are only interested in what can work. Their question is, "How does this work?" The fourth type is the dynamic one; they are only interested in applying knowledge (2001, 130-132).

With the differences such as seen above it is common sense that some cultures favor, value and reward learners according to their conviction or what they believe concerning these learning styles. Pushed further, this argument confirms Serpell's (1993) findings among the Chewa community of Zambia. He found out that the Chewa consider as intelligent a person who is wise and responsible; responsibility involves being able to handle tasks alone (Serpell 1993, 62-65). The implication of this is that relational learners are likely to be favored as compared to other types of learners among the Chewa community.

Teachers must vary their teaching to accommodate every learner in their classes because each one of them is unique. Farrant (1980) confirmed this truth when he argued that style of teaching, like living, is often influenced by the personality and the circumstance of the moment (Farrant 1980, 312-316). If teachers were influenced by their teachers during their student days, they are likely to teach the same way, use the same teaching methods that were used to them by their teachers. However a good teaching session must contain a blend of activities and presentations which provide something for all learning styles. If anything, by adjusting their teaching methods to fit these different learning styles, teachers are able to comfortably reach all their learners. This will enable each one of these learners to believe that God made his or her mind right.

Group learning has proved effective in reaching all learners despite the diversity of learning styles. Probably this is because of the relational aspect of learning for which the open circle has advocated. According to Bowen and Bowen, a high percentage of Kenyan students learn best when teachers employ relational learning strategies (1988, 67). However, for the open circle to effectively affect these young lives there must be a blend of relational and analytical teaching strategies.

Jesus utilized these in all His teachings. Though Christ taught in parables, His teaching context was always relational, either to a small band of disciples or the multitude, either along the road, in homes or on the sea shore. At times He used a question to answer another question, this pushed people beyond their comfort zones. On several occasions He lectured. At times He just preached. His examinations were in most cases practical, majoring on what works, “Go...do not take the purse; Heal... the sick; Sell everything... then come and follow me (Luke 10:3-918: 22 NIV).” Now that Christ’s teaching context was mainly relational, it is only fair that Christian educators teach as Christ taught them.

### Teaching Methods

Learning is not always easy. At times teachers face seemingly insurmountable obstacles of culture, language, history and physical environment. Yet they have to find a way and means of approaching students, ensuring that knowledge and skills are passed on to the next generation.

Gangel and Hendricks (2003) for example, stated that once the teacher has understood the criteria, the learning process and the teaching schedules for the age-group, creative methods can be chosen. They propose four guidelines which are crucial to the selection of creative teaching methods:

1. Make sure that the method or activity matches the learners’ level of ability and maturity.
2. Provide several choices of activities to stimulate interest and prevent boredom.
3. Include planned questions that assist the learner to think through the levels of knowledge, comprehension and application.
4. Include guidance and encouragement that sustain the learner’s interest and motivation. (2003, 174-175)

There are two distinct categories of teaching styles, these are teacher-centered and student or learner-centered. Among the teacher- centered teaching methods are lecture and memorization, while student-centered are group projects and group



activity. The guidelines given by Gangel and Hendricks are geared toward learner-centered teaching methods.

According to Mungathia (2005), teaching methods must be able to communicate content and experience. She argued that a method is simply an activity designed to hook a student so that information and meaning can be communicated, to lead to insight, or encourage response (Mungathia 2005, 15). Gangel and Hendricks on the other hand have emphasized the importance of choosing and using creative methods which, when properly applied, serve as valuable tools in the teaching-learning process. They have stated that the needs of the learners must be the foremost consideration in choice of any teaching method (2003, 175). To a large extent, teaching methods determine the teaching-learning process. Curzon, for example, summarized what Mungathia, Gangel and Hendricks said concerning good teaching methods. He concluded that good teaching methods should consider three areas: students, subject matter, and the resources constraints (Curzon 2004, 312-314). Critically looked at, Curzon's argument implies that any teaching method applied appropriately in consideration of these three elements impacts positively on the teaching-learning process. Open circle, like any other teaching method, must be looked at from these elements that Curzon discussed.

Indeed there are many effective teaching methods, each having an appropriate use to improve one's effectiveness in teaching. One therefore chooses a method best suited to their purpose of teaching. Draves (1984) came up with a good advice for teachers. He stressed the flexibility in teaching techniques so that the teacher is able to use a variety of teaching methods. He gave an example of the adult learning-teaching techniques. For informal adult-oriented teaching, there are four types of learning formats depending on the kind of subject one is teaching. The teacher's objective is to

have each of his learners gaining maximum involvement from the participants and making it attractive and fulfilling in their learning process. He suggested group discussion and formal class interaction (Draves 1984, 62-63). Because the open circle is group based, it is easier to integrate as many teaching methods as is fitting depending on the learners learning styles.

### Teacher-Centered Teaching Methods

In the traditional teacher-centered approach, the teacher imparts to a class of students, subject matter which is pre-determined before hand. The classes normally take place in pre-determined places and within set times. Among the methods that are teacher-centered are lecture, memorization and recitation.

#### *Lecture Method*

The term lecture is derived from the Latin word '*legere*' to read. Lecturing then simply refers to the process of teaching in which an instructor gives an oral presentation of facts or concepts. The procedure involves the clarification or explanation of some major ideas that have been formed into a question or a problem (Javalera 1975, 25). A lecture is a formal discourse delivered for the purpose of instruction or knowledge. Traditionally it is believed that students are empty slates hence the teacher needs to fill them with knowledge.

The open circle, using group based teaching method, carries the conviction that students are not empty slates. They indeed bring with them varied experiences in class. Their experiences form the basis on which any method of teaching may be integrated with the open circle.

As much as the open circle may appreciate lecture method especially in the giving of instructions, explaining of the objectives and giving an overview of

activities, time constraints should never dictate the use of lecture method or be a challenge to the open circles because time is content defined (Bruce et al 2000, 339). That is, time does not define content but content dictates time. With an in-depth treatment of content, the open circle method of teaching is expected to be an efficient method of transferring knowledge and structuring information. More so, it must stimulate thinking because it is presumed to create and engage dialogue between the teacher and the learners.

### ***Memorization and Recitation***

Mungathia (2005) emphasized that memorization and recitation are teaching methods that utilize a student to teacher communication process; the teacher gains the understanding of the student's level of knowledge and achievement through listening. Also, the student becomes actively involved in the learning process. The difficulty that exists in this method is the limit of one-way communication; even though the speaking has been shifted from teacher to student (Mungathia 2005, 17). An implication is that one must guard against rote memory without understanding. Mungathia then went ahead to suggest use of memorization and recitation as follows;

1. Seek to make all material to be memorized meaningful to the student.
2. Apply review principles to strengthen learning retention.
3. When memorization has been made, give the student opportunity to demonstrate that they have achieved.
4. Utilize the available visual materials to increase the memorization potential of students (2005, 17).

## Learner-Centered Methods

Student-centered learning is an approach to education focused on the needs of the students, rather than those involved in the educational process, such as the teachers and education administrators. These methods focus on the student's needs, abilities, interests and learning styles. They acknowledge students' voice as central to the learning experiences for every learner. There are a number of methods which are learner friendly. Group discussion, and question and answer methods are considered here.

### *Group Discussion*

Group discussion is an instructional strategy that organizes students into small groups so that they can work together. In this way, students maximize their own and each other's learning. Group discussion is the most commonly used teaching method among adults. Brookfield emphasized that this method aims at encouraging the adults to undertake intellectually challenging and personal preparation ventures in non-threatening setting. It is this that has caused teachers of adults to advocate for this method. He admitted that it is only in the context of such groups that some of the most challenging and existing personal adventures in learning occur (1986, 135). Groups act as a powerful motivator and reinforcement to learning. They provide the occasion and context of vigorous debate, brainstorming and exploration of vividly contrasting positions. The disciples of our Lord are an example to this. Peter is not of the same position as the sons of thunder (John and James). Neither are the sons of thunder similar in position with Thomas who needed hard facts to believe.

The choosing of the Twelve by our Lord Jesus Christ exemplified the 'group' teaching method as one of the best. He chose small group community of disciples to present and process the good news of the kingdom. With this group Christ spent most

of His time and shared most of His teachings. This in itself tells us that there is growth in group dynamics, whereby we all grow at the same time and probably pace.

Wilhoit and Detoni appeared to favor group discussion over other methods of teaching, they claimed that effective small groups have a direction in mind and cultivate growth towards the end. The more clearly the purpose is understood and embraced by members, the more satisfactory is their group experience both fulfilling the personal and the task of the group (1995, 236).

This functioning that is described by Wilhoit and Detoni speaks of value.

What this means is that high value is placed on both the person and the group in terms of growth and satisfaction. Then, looking back at what Brookfield said in comparison with what was said by Detoni and Wilhoit, one is convinced that group discussion is mainly a relational type of a teaching method, in that a group sets up social interactions between members that often result in the learners' normal operation procedures becoming imbalanced, a condition which often leads to further enlarged insights.

Commenting further on the strength aspect of group discussion, Wilhoit and Detoni said that, groups are enablers of new meanings as members contribute to the learning process. Concerning 'development' they noted that this method does not limit the instruments or the settings of learning. And those small groups encourage, see and realize communal development. These developments include empowering of leaders through participation on small group discussions (1995, 240-248).

Within groups such as the open circle, one sees the biblical sense of iron sharpening another iron, which seems similar to what these two authors suggest. Success therefore does not recognize an individual rather it becomes collective. 'I am

not super human; rather, all are gifted for one another.' As much as there is a place for an individual, there should be a place for all of us within the open circle.

However we must admit too that small groups discussion have their own shortcomings as well. Hannan, who has been using this method for quite some time had this to say:

The results gained from small group discussion will in most cases be dependent on the experience and leadership of the facilitator. Small group learning is considerably more difficult to manage than lectures, because a closer account must be taken of the participants' behavior, personalities and difficulties. Small group work can be time consuming especially if the group is communicative one. There is possibility of some members overdoing others. (2002, 18)

### *Question and Answers*

Questions raise curiosity and interest and are stimuli for learning. If a question is carefully constructed, it can assist the learner in reviewing and increasing knowledge. This should be done in the process of a student searching for answers to the question. Compared with other teaching methods such as lecture and discussion methods, questions enable teachers to focus on particular points which attract the interest of learners. These questions if well used will maintain and keep the direction of the learning.

A major difficulty however is the choice of appropriate questions. Though it may not be hard to ask questions, it requires a considerable thought in asking those questions that will be of help to the learner. The open circle teaching method being group-based naturally requires the teacher to prepare before hand, considering the challenge that is ahead of them. This challenge is set to come from learners who are eager to learn and even challenge the status quo. Because of this, teachers prepare logical and intellectually stimulating questions to challenge both intellectual and emotional faculties of the learners. These questions are geared towards the relational

and intellectual growth and thus directing learners towards positive co-operate scholarship.

### ***Computer-Based Learning***

The development of the modern microcomputer and its use in the various forms of computer-based learning constitutes a most important development in educational technology. There can be no doubt that the computer has the potential to make a tremendous impact on educational practice. Whether it is employed in the substitute-tutor mode or in the simulated-laboratory mode, the use of the computer as a delivery system enables an extremely wide range of educational objectives to be achieved.

Use of the computer can also provide a wide range of otherwise inaccessible learning experiences. It can, for example, enable learners to carry out simulated experiments in fields like human genetics, macro-economics and sociology where actual experiments are impossible for ethical, economic or practical reasons. Being so relational in its orientation, Simulation experiments are better handled at group level. This can makes computer mediated teaching appropriate for the open circles. Such program engages learners both at individual and group level, in activities as such needing expression, this expression is what is expected within the open circle.

### Summary of Reviewed Literature

The teaching–learning process depends solely on three main things, the learners, the learning environment (context) and the content. These three things in most cases determine the teaching methods that teachers adopt. It must be noted that

teaching methods are only a means to an end. However a good and appropriate teaching method is a sure means of realizing the desired teaching goals.

Any teaching method that is chosen must put in consideration of the learner's gender and learning experience. Depending on the content a teacher may select a specific teaching method. At time teachers must let the context dictate the teaching method. The open circle teaching method is a case in mind. It is important that teachers look at various learning styles manifested in class before settling on a specific teaching method as a method of choice.

The teacher as a decision maker holds the key to any teaching method used in the teaching-learning process. Although this in most cases has been a matter of preference, teaching facilities have at times dictated the teaching methods to be used. Without such facilities as computers, it is difficult to choose computer mediated teaching as a teaching method. Operating in rural Africa, the open circle may find such methods a challenge. It is important therefore that the 'town' open circle adopt some of these modern teaching methods for effective teaching-learning experience.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This section describes the methods and procedures that were used in this study. This study was evaluative, seeking to evaluate the effectiveness of the open circle as a teaching method in urban Africa. It was not the intention of this researcher that a decision be reached out of this research; as such this researcher's intention was that this research be treated as basic and formative evaluation (Patton 2003, 214-217).

#### **Research Design**

This study was essentially evaluative and utilized the qualitative approach. Qualitative inquiry employs different knowledge claims, strategies of inquiry and methods in data collection and analysis as compared to quantitative inquiry. It relies more on text image data (Creswell 2003, 179), which means that the designs, techniques and measures used was not necessarily to produce discrete numerical data. Furthermore, this took place in the natural setting and used multiple methods that were interactive and humanistic. The researcher therefore set this study in the Anglican Church, of St Luke's Kenyatta, in Nairobi. Here the researcher interacted with the members of the Youth open circle. Qualitative research is also emergent rather than tightly prefigured because the research questions may change and be refined as the inquirer learns what to ask and whom to ask (Creswell 2003, 181). The researcher varied methods of inquiry depending on the age, education level, gender, the period one has been a member of the open circle, and the ethnic background of participants.

The case study method as one of the qualitative research approach basically means in-depth exploration of a program, an event, an activity, a process or one or more individuals. The cases are bound by time and activity, the researcher collects detailed information using a number of collection procedures over a particular time span (Creswell 2003, 184). Most case studies are based on the premise that a case can be located that is typical of many other cases. The case under study is viewed as an example of the class of events or a group of individuals (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999, 173). Therefore, it was the researcher's hope that the effectiveness of the youth open circle will hopefully act as an example of the effectiveness of other open circles within the All Saints Cathedral Diocese.

#### The Researcher's Role

As mentioned before, qualitative research is interpretive and the inquirer is typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience. This approach introduces a range of strategic, ethical, and personal issues into the process. Therefore, this researcher identified explicitly the biases, values, and personal interests about this particular research topic and process (Creswell 2003, 184).

In the past, this researcher has been involved in teaching the youth open circles at St. Luke's Kenyatta. This researcher was encouraged by incredible positive changes that have taken place every time specific topics such as worship-leading have been taught in the open circles as compared to preaching the same topic in church. This researcher chose the youth open circle because it was typical of other open circles within the All Saint Cathedral Diocese. This researcher was also, in contact with the youth open circle, especially being a regular teacher of this circle.

## Entry

The researcher discussed the proposed study with the Vicar in charge of St. Luke's Church. This was to seek permission to carryout research among the members of the youth open circle.

The researcher requested a letter of introduction from the office of the Academic Dean of Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology.

## Population

Mugenda and Mugenda defined population as a complete set of individuals or objects with same or common observable characteristics (2003, 41). In this study, all members of the youth open circle were a complete set of people with same or common observable characteristics; they therefore formed the population of this research.

The youth open circle included forty two young people of ages ranging from eighteen to twenty seven and three regular teachers, coming from different African cultural backgrounds.

## Data Collection Procedures

Interview method is commonly used in qualitative research. In this study however, it was not possible to interact with the entire forty five members because of the time limitations. Initially the researcher interviewed eight members of the open circle according to the purposeful sample done on the forty five member population. But as new information emerged, the researcher added four more members. This is because, in the course of data gathering, some new information emerged. Thus the researcher returned with additional questions to these new participants with a hope that these would be able to give the needed information for this research. Because of

gender sensitivity, out of the twelve interviewed, six were male while six others were female. Prior to this, the researcher had an interview with Rev. Cyrus Manje who was the vicar in charge at the time of this research. As for the interviewees, they must have continuously attended the youth open circle for a minimum of four years. In addition to interviews, the researcher collected data through observations.

### The Instrument Design

Because of the nature of the study, interview method was the best and suitable one. An interview is an oral administration of a questionnaire or an interview schedule (Mugenda and Mugenda 1999, 83). It is also advantageous since it provides an in-depth data which may not be possible to get when using a questionnaire. Interviews too allow the researcher to have control over the line of questioning. On the other hand, they are limited in that they provide indirect information that is filtered through the views of the interviewees. The researcher's presence may also bias responses not to mention that all people are not equally articulate and perceptive (Creswell 2003, 187). The interview questions were recorded in an interview schedule. An interview schedule is a set of questions that the interviewer asks when interviewing. It makes it possible to obtain data required to answer the research questions of study. It is also used to standardize the interview situation so that interviewers or the research assistants can ask the same questions in the same manner (Creswell 2003, 86). Appendix one has the interview questions.

Finally the researcher used observation whereby field notes were taken on the behavior and activities of individuals on the research site. This gave the researcher firsthand experience with the open circle members and as such he recorded information as was revealed. Unusual aspects were also noticed during observations. The limitations of using observation include limited time of attending and

observational skills from the researcher. As well, the researcher may be seen as intrusive to private situations. Then this private information that may be observed may not be reported due to its privacy (Creswell 2003, 190). Alternate names were given so that the identity of participants was concealed.

### Plan for Data Analysis

The process for data analysis involves making sense out of written and visual data. It involves preparing that data or analysis, conducting different analyses, moving deeper and deeper into understanding the data, and making an interpretation of the data (Creswell 2003, 190). The data analysis was conducted as an activity simultaneously with data collection, data interpretation and narrative reporting-writing. The researcher asked analytical questions and wrote memos throughout the study. The data analysis involved detailed description of the activities of the open circle. An analysis of data for themes or issues then followed. Bearing in mind the specific ways of interpreting data in a case study, the researcher utilized some generic steps for qualitative research that included the following:

### Data Organization

The organization involved transcribing interviews, typing field notes, sorting and arranging the data into different types depending on the source of information. The researcher used note cards to record the available data.

### Reading through Data

After organizing the data, the researcher read through it to get the sense of the information and to reflect on its overall meaning.

### Categories, Themes and Patterns (Coding)

Because the researcher's intention was to find out the effectiveness of the open circle method of teaching, the researcher endeavored to expose thoughts, ideas, and meaning contained in answers given in those interviews. The researcher used open, axial and selective coding. In open coding, the researcher did initial analysis and discovery. The researcher sorted out key concepts and their properties until a key concept (s) was determined. Axial coding followed, whereby further determining of relationships between categories was carried out. Finally, in selective coding the researcher went after more information only after he had identified categories. This helped the researcher evaluate the youth open circle, later forming new explanations about effective use of the open circle teaching methods. In all these, the researcher ensured that the data collected was manageable, and that the researcher endeavored to hear what was said. From these interviews and observations the researcher developed a rich conceptual description of the effectiveness of the open circle teaching method.

### Writing of the Report

Finally, this being a qualitative narrative the researcher presented the categories and themes, using narrative description.

### Validity and Reliability of Instrument

In essence validity is the degree to which an instrument measures what is intended, while reliability is defined as the level of internal consistency or stability of a measuring device over time (Gall et al 2007, 249-257). In view of these, this researcher used several checks to make sure that the interview questions under use were as reliable and valid as possible. This minimized errors that would have arisen from a faulty instrument.

To ensure that the interview questions are valid and reliable, the instrument was cross checked by two lecturers with experience in research (the researcher's supervisors) during the research period. This instrument was cross checked in three areas: the clarity of the question, the level of difficulty, and the appropriateness of the question. This cross checking helped the researcher find out if the interviews and observation memos would yield consistent data. If any question was found to be wanting, the researcher rephrased the question or adjusted as advised. This in itself helped in the process of uncovering some of the ambiguities that were found in the instrument.

Secondly, the instrument was pilot checked with three youth pastors, N.E.G.S.T., graduates involved in church education ministries. These three Pastors had more than five years experience as youth Pastors. They were interviewed to check the degree to which they felt the instrument was reliable and was able to measure the effectiveness of open circle teaching method.

In addition, the researcher triangulated data received. Because of the information that was emerging, it was necessary that the researcher return to interviewees or have additional interviews to confirm or disconfirm data received. This happened when the researcher added four more interviewees.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **DATA ANALYSIS AND DATA INTERPRETATION**

#### **Reporting Research Findings**

Data collection and analysis strategies are similar across qualitative methods, but the way the findings are reported is diverse. Since narrative text is the most frequent form of displaying qualitative data, the results for this research is presented in a descriptive narrative form (Creswell 2003, 205).

The researcher made observations both in the open circle class and in church during church services and gathered information that forms part of the research findings. In addition to these, the researcher initially interviewed eight people. Because of the new information that was emerging, the researcher went ahead to interview four more people making a total of twelve people.

The interviewees were aged between twenty and twenty seven years, all of whom have been members of the open circle for at least three years. In an effort to create gender fairness, the researcher picked six males and six females; this was as a result of a purposeful sample that was done from the population of forty five members. The researcher put himself under the obligation not to use the real names of the informants. Therefore, the names that appear in this report are not the real names of the interviewees.

This research was concerned with the question of effectiveness of the open circle teaching method in the context of urban Africa. The researcher therefore explored the effectiveness of the open circle teaching method in urban Africa with a



specific focus on St. Luke's Church Kenyatta. The information gathered from the said interviewees and the researcher's observations were guided by three research questions.

- RQ1. What factors affect the effective use of the open circle teaching method at St. Luke's Parish Kenyatta?
- RQ2. How do learners through the open circle teaching method, transfer learning to real life contexts?
- RQ3. How are church objectives being realized through the use of the open circle teaching method?

#### Factors Affecting Effective use of the Open Circle Teaching Method

There are several factors that have affected the use of the open circle teaching method at St. Luke's Church Kenyatta, positively or negatively. The interviewees mentioned the following significant factors: the relevance of topics, the involvement of the members in the process of selecting or choosing subjects/topics, the effectiveness of teachers, the learning environment and the teaching methods.

#### *The Relevancy of Subjects Taught*

Concerning the relevance of the subjects, Cindy who is a Sudanese observes that it is because of this that she attends the open circle. She says that not everyone in her family is born again; she considers it her responsibility to shine the light of God within this family by way of evangelism which she has learnt in the open circle. "In the open circle we are taught how to evangelize our families," she says.

On the other hand, John, who is from Kenya, asserts that the open circle teaching method is effective in dealing with such topics as politics and governance, which he claims is a relevant topic considering the situation in Kenya today. Through

these young people the researcher concludes that, relevance is a positive factor contributing to the effective use of the open circle.

### ***The Process of Selecting Topics***

The method used in selecting topics of discussion is a factor in the effective use of the open circle as a teaching method. What all these interviewees indicated to this researcher is that the topics of discussion emerge from within the group. That on a specified Sunday, members are requested to propose subjects they think are important, later the open circle leadership arranges them in order of urgency and priority. And if pastors or church members contribute to the process of topic choice, then the open circle leadership has to approve such topics before discussion. In trying to summarize the process to the researcher, Gertrude points out that though some church elders and even pastors recommend topics to be discussed, it is only the open circle leaders who harmonize and decide which ones to tackle as the year progresses.

### ***Choice of Teachers***

Topics may be relevant and appropriate but teachers have a great bearing on how these topics are discussed. Kevo admits that one of the strengths of the open circle is, “the teachers” who are selected to lead in the discussion of these topics every Sunday. He qualifies them as people who know the content and live by example of what they teach. Shiro adds that the process of selecting teachers is a tedious one, it involves the open circle leadership and the pastoral staff, much care is taken that the right persons are invited. These teachers are experts in their own fields; they include social workers, pastors, medical practitioners, qualified counselors and lawyers.

At times members of the open circle, who have knowledge in identified fields, though without much experience, are given a chance to teach. This is indeed a morale

booster according to Sharon. She thinks it will motivate other members to excel in their careers and studies. By the fact that some of them lead in some of these discussions, the question of ownership of the open circle does not arise.

### ***Learning Environment***

In terms of the learning environment they are all in agreement that learning under a tree in the open circle is the most exciting. Lillian who has been attending the open circle for sometimes claims that learning in class is too focused, to the front and to the teacher as compared to learning under a tree. Justo adds that learning under a tree provides an opportunity for change, having spent the whole week in class. John is even more particular, “In class we don’t talk, under a tree we talk and exchange ideas before answering a question.” However, this also comes with challenges for students. For example Martin reveals that his mind wanders and is carried away quickly because of what goes on in the public.

The researcher’s observations in the open circle class confirms what these informers have revealed as factors affecting the effective use of the open circle teaching method at St. Luke’s Church Kenyatta.

### ***Teaching Methods***

Asked about teaching methods, all interviewees agreed on variety, citing the lack of variety as one of the weaknesses of the open circle teaching methods. For example, Dorothy admits that PowerPoint presentations capture minds more than just listening. Margaret likewise says that when one watches something, it sticks longer in ones’ memory than when one does the listening alone. There is a general agreement that methods that are ‘participatory’ such as group discussion should be incorporated in the open circle.

## Transferring of Learning to Real Life Context

It is one thing learning in class, it is yet another bringing what you have learned into a real life situation. What RQ2 was really asking is how the knowledge gained through the open circle is utilized in the day to day living of the open circle members. Kevo, who is a practicing medical doctor, says that through the open circle he is now able to counsel patients in a ‘Christian manner.’ He admits having been taught how to counsel patients in his medical class, but he was never taught the open circle way. “This is a Christian way of counseling,” he says.

John who is a banker now appropriates and appreciates unity in diversity. He confesses that open circle teaching has made him appreciate and understand people. “We must understand that every one of us brings a unique experience with them in any given group. As such I am able to appreciate different people in my place of work because of the church business of the open circles,” he comments.

As much as spiritual growth may be an individual thing, it is group responsibility as well. Dorothy observes that it is because of the challenges she gets in the open circle that have motivated her to read her Bible. The open circle has therefore made Bible study real to her. This is what this researcher would refer to as, iron sharpening another iron.

Apart from the open circle being a motivation in the spiritual things, it has motivated other members to advance in terms of career. After they have been taught about career advancement or even challenged by other members, some of the members of the open circle have chosen to try it out in real life. Justo’s example is the best. He says, “When I joined the open circle, I had just completed form four, but I was challenged through the open circle teachings and by my peers who had higher

academic achievements. I decided to do the same thing (furthering my studies) and today I have a diploma in international businesses.”

The family too has gained through the teachings received in the open circle. Gertrude admits that before she joined the open circle, her relationship with her family members was not good. However, after going through such topics as ‘conflict resolution’ at family level in the open circle, her relationship with her family members has seen tremendous improvement.

In an effort to reach the wider society, the open circle is involved in evangelism and civic education. Martin informs this researcher, that shortly before the just concluded general election, the open circle members were involved in civic education. But this was after they had had a lecture ‘themselves’ on the electoral process and the legislation that goes with it in the open circle.

#### Realization of Church Objectives

RQ3 mainly dealt with the realization of the church objectives through the open circle. The main aim of beginning the open circle according to Rev. Manje (the vicar in charge) was to help the church realize one of her goals, that of training young people for ministry. He hoped that the open circle would act as a seed bed for both lay and ordained ministry. Apparently these learners seem to find their way up through the open circle. Gertrude confirms this to the researcher when she observes that a number of their members have joined various Bible schools and theological colleges especially Carlile (Church Army) College in Nairobi. She mentions three names to this effect, one of whom is now an ordained clergy; all these she claims are products of the open circle.

The above suggests upward mobility, indeed progression must be at the heart of every minister. St. Paul would comfortably entrust the Ephesian’s church into the

hands of trusted elders (Acts20:13-31). That is to say, he either mentored or trained one who would come after him. Probably Timothy and Titus who seem very close to him, he in fact calls them as his sons (I Timothy 1:2; Titus 1:4). Rev. Manje (the vicar in charge) would be happy to entrust St. Luke's Church into the hands of trusted people either on his transfer or retirement. The training of the youth in the open circle is geared towards leaving the church in the hands of people who can be trusted with the heavenly mysteries (1 Timothy 2:2). This is so because, as the elders resign, young trustworthy people must take over. In the open circle, these young people are taught the Bible and the doctrines of the Anglican community and in this way knowledge is passed on from the old to the younger generation.

The act of leading church services or even praise and worship is in itself a fulfillment of the church objectives. Antony says that before he joined the open circle, he could not even stand before two people to express himself but that today he is the leader of praise and worship team and that occasionally he leads main church services. In this way then, ministry leaders are raised.

The open circle members participate in church administrative leadership through the parish council. A good example is Justo and Cindy who are members of the parish council. They informed this researcher that they were elected last year as members of the Parish council which is an administrative arm and a policy making organ of the Parish.

Evangelism is key to any church, if growth is to be realized. John has been a member of the evangelistic/missions committee for the last two years. He says that he has been leading the youth in evangelism and missions for the last four years. In this committee he says, evangelistic matters including missions' budget are discussed.

Once again the church has realized her evangelistic goal through members of the open circle.

### Report Interpretation

In answering the statement of the research problem, which was concerned with the question of the effectiveness of the open circle teaching method in the context of urban Africa, the researcher has made the following observations:

1. That the open circle teaching method develops and nurtures relationship.
2. That the issues or subjects of discussion emerge from the learners.
3. That the exploration and exploitation of knowledge is not a preserve of the chosen few.
4. That the open circle is a place where talents and giftings are identified and developed.
5. That the open circle is a seedbed for present and future church workers including ordained ministry.
6. That the open circle is a place for teaching Anglican Church doctrines and other related church teachings.

Below are complete and more elaborate explanations of the observations of the effectiveness of the open circle teaching method in the context of urban Africa.

### Developing and Nurturing Relationships

Christianity is about relationships, and the Bible is a book about successful and failed relationships, successful on the account of Christ's redemption yet failed relationships on the account of Adamic nature of sin. In Genesis chapter one, we meet the Creator God, while in Revelations chapter twenty two we meet the redeemer God. In both of these accounts we see a 'relater' God. As His created beings, we are

“relational”, with no exception. The open circle teaching method is therefore not simply propositional, didactic and dogmatic. While focusing on content and truth, this method is much more relational and communal. These relationships are on three levels; one, open circle member’s relationship with God, two, their relationship with fellow learners and three, their relationship with facilitators.

The above truth was observed by the researcher both within the open circle class and in church during church services. Cindy confirmed this to the researcher at her admission that before she started attending the open circle she had a strained relationship with her mother but now things have changed for the better. While John on the other hand has recorded improved and meaningful devotion time since he joined the open circle.

#### Relevant Curriculum

The issues or subjects of discussion that emerge from the open circle learners can be summed up as the open circle curriculum. In essence, the relevancy of the curriculum defines and guides any meaningful training of these young learners. The research findings reveal that the open circle does not have any explicit curriculum. Instead the curriculum emerges implicitly from the members of the open circle and with input from the pastoral staff and leaders of St. Luke’s Church Kenyatta (Hardy 2006, 163-165). From the researcher’s observation and the interviews carried out, all the interviewees confirmed that indeed the subjects of discussion come from among them.

Research findings as well reveal that, this ‘implicit’ curriculum revolves around the needs, hopes and aspirations of the learners of the open circle. That is, this ‘non-explicit’ curriculum is developed in such a way that the learners are informed about their faith and application of faith in life and ministry in the realities of the



African ‘urban’ context. Thus the curriculum aims to inform these learners who will minister effectively in African urban areas and develop ministries that will transform the Anglican communities in the cities of Africa (Villifane 2000, 5-7).

When asked why he was using the open circle to teach confirmation classes, Rev Manje (vicar in charge) answered that, the open circle was the most appropriate place so that other members can either learn or be reminded of what they learned previously in their confirmation class. This then confirms the researcher’s assumption that the open circle is among other means used to teach Anglican doctrine to the young people. In the course of applying their faith, the researcher observed that the members of the open circle share their faith in forums such as evangelistic missions and in the course of duty like the one mentioned by Sharon, that is, civic education.

The researcher found out that commitment to spiritual development and character formation are held dearly in the open circle. This comes as a result of the love for God and commitment for the revealed word of God (Bible). This can be gleaned from the members’ positive response to devotions after joining the open circle. Improved family relationships, the warm interpersonal relationships and the emergent curriculum observed by this researcher are a testimony to these two values ‘love for God and His word, the Bible and character formation.’

#### Exploration and Exploitation of New Knowledge

Comparing the ‘conventional’ class sitting arrangement and the open circle, the interviewees claimed that the former is intimidating. They felt that even if one had something they knew, it was difficult to share. What this means to this researcher is that, ‘learners come to the ‘conventional’ class with an assumption that knowledge is a preserve of the teacher and that learners can only receive from this ‘reservoir.’

While the conventional sitting arrangement was intimidating, the open circle sitting arrangement was more relaxed and anticipated a free atmosphere where learners were free to explore and exploit new knowledge. This they did by way of sharing ideas among themselves and their facilitators. What this means then is that the open circle offers the atmosphere where everyone has a free hand in the exercise of the exploration and exploitation of knowledge. The researcher's interpretation of what these learners are saying can be summarized by the figures bellow;

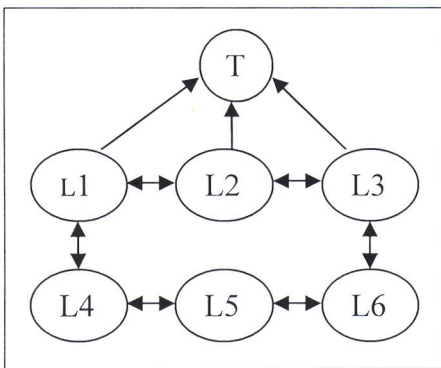


Fig 1. Conventional class

Key:

T- Teacher

L- Learners

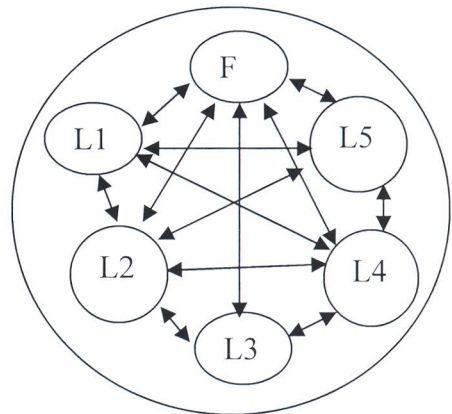


Fig 2. Open circle class

Whereas in the conventional class there seems to be a system of arrangement, the open circle class has a web of attachments. This signifies the free flow of information from both the learners and the facilitator. This is what the open circle learners seem to interpret as a free and relaxed atmosphere where exploitation and exploration of knowledge becomes a reality. The interpretation of the conventional class could be 'a systematized, fixed, directed approach as compared to the open circle which to this researcher is a free for all approach to the teaching-learning process.

## Identification and Development of Talent and Giftings

The main purpose of any education system is to identify and develop human power to replenish and replace the aged and the dying. This is a futuristic thought, whereby proper planning has to be put in place. From the findings the researcher summarized the human resource development as identification of specific abilities or talents, development of those identified talents and deployment of those with developed giftings. First, the research findings reveal that members of the open circle are given opportunity and helped to discover themselves in terms of areas of strength. Justo and Cindy being members of the Parish council are good example in this regard.

Secondly, these gifts are developed within the open circle, where equal chances are given for every learner to exercise their giftings and abilities. Topics that are chosen, such as career development, are geared towards the development of the talents of the learners. There is no selective choosing of the open circle learners; all who qualify as members of St. Luke's Church and are aged 18-27 become automatic members. What this means then, is that, learners come to class with varied experiences. This is what motivates the emergence and subsequent development of the abilities of the open circle learners. The researcher discovered that the open circle acted as a reservoir for ordained ministers. This is because at the time of this research, already three members had been ordained as ministers with the Anglican Church while four more were in various theological and Bible colleges where they were undergoing advanced training (development) in preparation for ordained ministry.

Thirdly, these gifted individuals are now deployed in the church for the performance of various duties depending on their giftings and abilities. The researcher observed that St. Luke's Church Kenyatta depends heavily on the open

circle members for various church services including praise and worship, ushering and leading of various church services. Church administrative leadership was an aspect in which members of the open circle were actively engaged. In this way, members of the open circle served St. Luke's Church Kenyatta in terms of human resources.

### The Teaching of the Basic Christian Doctrine

The researcher observed that, the open circle was used particularly to teach basic Christian doctrine and the traditions of the Anglican Communion. It is in the open circle that the Anglican debates throughout the world are brought and discussed. During the time this research was in progress, the debate concerning the ordaining of homosexual priests and bishops was discussed.

The inviting of teachers from other Christian organizations exposes the learners of the open circle to the differences that exist between the Anglican Church and the whole body of the faith community. Thus learners are able to appreciate accommodate and acknowledge that Anglicanism does not constitute the whole of the faith community and that they need to embrace others as their brothers and sister within the faith community.

Apart from the teaching of the basic Christian doctrine, the researcher observed that the open circle was a place of acting out the faith. Here, the sharing of information and items among members was observed. Members of the open circle exercised biblical sharing, whereby members responded to each other's needs. The practicing of the doctrines that were taught was reported.

## Summary

The open circle model of teaching at St. Luke's Church Kenyatta can be summarized or presented by the figure below:

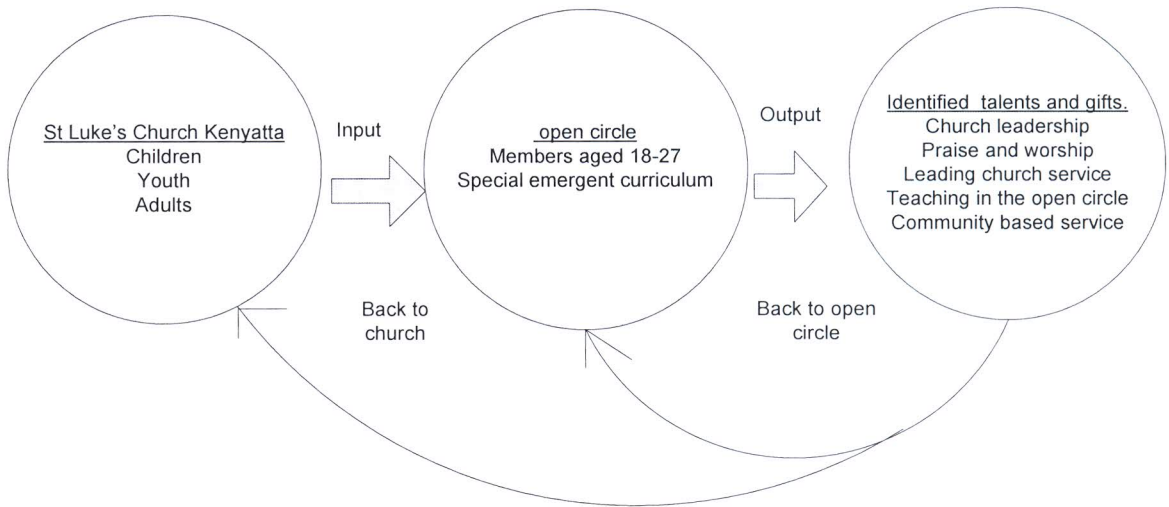


Fig 3. Summary of the open circle process.

In the figure above, the church is the pool from which the members of the open circle are drawn. The young people are sent for training in the open circle, where their needs are attended to using the emergent (from the youth, pastoral staff and church leadership) curriculum. In circle three, talents and gifts are identified from among these young people in the open circle. These trained young people go back to the church and within the open circle where they render services in all areas of ministry.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main purpose of this research was to explore the effectiveness of the open circle teaching method in urban Africa. The findings of this research will directly or indirectly influence policy, practice and future research especially in areas of learning. The study will hopefully contribute to understanding how young African people may be trained within the urban context they find themselves in. The findings are indeed a challenge to the Anglican churches within Nairobi and Africa as a whole, especially in urban Africa.

#### Conclusions

The findings and summaries in chapter four reveal that the open circle method of teaching is an attempt to contextualize an African approach to knowledge transfer within an urban setting. Indeed this model of teaching attempts to answer the question facing the church educationists as well as pastors who serve in African cities: how do we prepare young people who will adequately serve the church of Jesus Christ, and handle life challenges within the urban setting; a preparation that will reflect African understanding of knowledge transfer among the young people living within the rising urban centers of Africa.

This model offers an alternative to the western model of knowledge transfer which in most cases has been propositional, didactic and dogmatic. The African context is not similar, in that while continuing to focus on content and propositional truth, teaching must be relational, communal and aesthetic.

In the opinion of the researcher, this model at St. Luke's Church to a great degree answers four basic questions in relation to knowledge transfer: Firstly, what is it that the learner needs to know? Second, where should the learning take place? Thirdly, who should instruct? And fourth, how should the instructor transfer this knowledge and skills to the learner? This model thus goes beyond the measurement of the outcome that is purely a matter of cognitive attainment to the integration or relational realm as well. This is attained through its contextualized curriculum and its relevant focus in terms of fulfilling the vision and mission of St. Luke's Church Kenyatta.

Considering that curriculum emerges from the open circle members, the pastors and the church leadership, its credibility is not in question, in the sense that this curriculum is an answer to the needs of the church and the community. This makes the education program of the church more purposeful and focused.

### Implications

The research findings are a challenge to the church's education programs, Christian educationists and Christian education institutions. The church's education systems and programs must be purposeful and focused for any meaningful transfer of knowledge and skills to be realized. These programs must be tailored in a way that will create a holistic growth of the faith community.

Christian educationists should pay attention and be sensitive to the changing trends and systems within the education circles. Thus we must come up with curriculums that must be focused on content, propositional truth, relational, communal and aesthetic aspects. All these curriculums that are to be developed by Christian educationists must be able to address the needs of the learners, the learning

conditions and the instructors involved in the transfer of the said knowledge and skills.

Christian institutions of learning have to be sensitive to the ‘African realities.’ In this way, African challenges will have to be handled in an African context, and in an African way. However, this researcher notes that care must be taken in the way this has to be handled, for Africa does not exist in a vacuum and there are examples to learn, from other parts of the world.

### Recommendations

In view of the above conclusions and implications, the researcher recommends that there should be a more detailed research done in the areas of learning, the learner and the learning environment.

May be the question that needs to be tackled in terms of learning is, ‘How effective is the open circle teaching method in transferring of knowledge and skills to the learner?’

Effective learning requires elaborate and purposeful planning. In this study, the researcher found out that the open circle does not have an explicit curriculum that is followed. It is therefore the researcher’s recommendation that an explicit curriculum be formulated. This will help in the evaluation and monitoring of the learning process.

The said curriculum must be an answer to the felt needs of the church. Any education system that does not address itself to the needs of its constituents has low chances of success. The researchers understanding is that, Christian education must be an answer to the needs of the community of faith in terms of bringing them from a lower level of understanding to the higher level of faith application. In view of these, the researcher thinks that the church should have a sustained and ongoing research



program as an arm of Christian education. This department will be of help in the validation of the appropriate approach to the teaching-learning process such as the open circle.

Concerning the learner and the learning environment, contextualization is key. Contextualization of education and education processes is one area that needs to be addressed for any meaningful transfer of knowledge and skills to take place. This is because the ideal finds practice within a context. This 'context' will be receptive or not depending on how the ideal is put forth to the learner. Maybe the question of research has to be, "How do Africans learn? How do Africans come to know what they know?"

The learning environment affects the learner in many ways, either negatively or positively. Learning facilities and especially so the difference of the experience of the rural and city learning facilities will surely interfere with the teaching-learning process. This researcher recommends that a study be carried out to establish the level of interference the city has had on this open circle learning since it was mainly practiced within the rural setting.

From the findings of this study, it seems to this researcher that facilitated learning is relational learning. However the open circle facilitators seem not to have had any initial training. It is the researcher's recommendation that the church puts in place a good facilitator training program, that is, training of trainers.

Although the open circle is only a means to an end, a good means will help precipitate a good ending. The success of the open circle may become a point of departure for any church education progress in Africa.

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## **APPENDICES**

### **INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

I intend to carry out a research on the effectiveness of the open circle as a teaching method at St. Luke's Kenyatta. To help me get the information needed, I request that you answer these questions giving as much information as you can. I will regard all the information given to me as private and confidential.

#### **Introductory Questions**

1. Tell me about yourself?
2. For how long have you been a member of the youth open circle?

#### **Key Questions**

1. In what ways are the topics covered relevant to you?
2. How have you been involved in deciding the topics to be covered?
3. What topics do you think should be included?
4. How would you describe the effectiveness of the teachers?
5. What is your opinion in regard to learning under a tree and learning in class?
6. What other teaching methods would you prefer alongside the open circle?
7. In which ways has the open circle approach affected your life?
8. In your opinion, what differences do the youth who participate in the open circle learning show compared to those who do not?
9. How have you used the knowledge and skills you have gained from the open circle to handle life situations?
10. What church/church related activities are you involved in?

**Observation Protocol**

<b><i>DESCRIPTIVE NOTES</i></b>	<b><i>REFLECTIVE NOTES</i></b>
Portraits of the participants Reconstruction of the dialogue Description of the physical setting Accounts of particular events or activities.	Personal thoughts, speculations, feelings, ideas and prejudices during research.

## DVCAA's Letter of Introduction



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April 9, 2008

Rev. Cyrus Manje Kariuki  
Anglican Church of Kenya  
Diocese of All Saints Cathedral  
St. Luke's Parish Kenyatta  
Box 20775-00202  
Nairobi


Dear Rev. Kariuki,

#### **RE: RESEARCH WORK**

The bearer of this letter, Mr. Stephen Many is a student at Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology (NEGST) and is doing research towards the completion of the Master of Divinity in Christian Education degree. The research is on "A Study into the Open Circle as a Teaching Method: St. Luke's Church Kenyatta."

Any assistance that you can give to Mr. Many will be highly appreciated.

Sincerely,

  
John Ochola, (PhD.)  
**Academic Dean**